

Total recall

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The news across the globe about South Africa's calamitous listeriosis outbreak continues to make headlines. By 26 March, 982 laboratory-confirmed listeriosis cases across the country were reported to NICD since the beginning of January 2017, and 189 deaths recorded.



With the continued threat and reality of foodborne illnesses and product recalls, food safety remains a priority for consumers and food chain manufacturers. While South Africa may have identified the source of the listeria outbreak, the human and economic cost, as well as damage to brand reputation is extensive.

Coding and marking is essential for providing information on products, labels and packaging. "Brand owners incorporate marks or codes onto their products or packaging to protect themselves and consumers by ensuring security throughout the supply chain," explains Pyrotec PackMark's general manager, Brandon Pearce. "It also makes traceability possible, providing a record of reliability for products, and makes efficient stock control possible." For consumers, 'best by' and 'use by' dates confirm that the product is safe to consume. These markings also help consumers to derive

the most value from their purchases and reduce food waste.

However, for coding and marking to be effective it needs to be error-free and despite automated production lines human error is inevitable. "In addition to its world-class coding and marking equipment, Markem-Imaje's CoLOS software, exclusively distributed in southern Africa by Pyrotec PackMark, reduces human error through centralised data management that links, manages and operates all printers across packaging lines," Brandon explains.

"CoLOS offers real-time data by linking the production plan to individual end-of-line packing machines. This increases the productivity visibility of each machine, provides more accurate scheduling, and downtime information lets operators identify the causes of machine errors. It also provides accurate performance reporting and, importantly, automates coding information to avoid the risk of operator error," notes Brandon.

The reporting benefits of CoLOS software are impressive, and supervisors have access to production statuses at any time, immediately providing live updates of any issues on the line.

Packaging Line Traceability (PLT) solutions such as CoLOS are scalable and can transform coding and marking at any level of a line (units, trays, cases or pallets). Alternatively, it can be integrated into the complete packaging line from units to pallets.

"Correctly coded, marked and labelled products limit recalls, save money and time, protect consumers and manufacturers, discourage counterfeiting, and ensure advanced traceability throughout the entire supply chain," he concludes.

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